

NEWS RELEASE

Alabama Department of Public Safety

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AMBER Alert Awareness Day Jan. 13, *Program's Focus is Bringing Children Home Safely*

MONTGOMERY — The U.S. Department of Justice has declared Jan. 13, 2006, as AMBER Alert Awareness Day, with the annual event this year marking the 10th anniversary of the abduction and murder of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman in Arlington, Texas.

That event sparked the AMBER Alert program, which soon spread to states and communities nationwide and has contributed to the safe recovery of more than 214 children nationwide. AMBER, which stands for America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response, is a voluntary partnership among law enforcement agencies and broadcasters to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child abduction cases.

Alabama's AMBER Alert program was launched in 2003. Since that time 10 AMBER Alerts have been issued in the state with the safe recovery of each child in every case. "The extraordinary success of the AMBER program in Alabama has been accomplished through the cooperation of broadcasters, law enforcement and a concerned public who all have the same goal – the safe recovery of missing and endangered children," said Col. W.M. Coppage, Public Safety director.

Coppage said the Alabama Department of Public Safety is pleased to join with AMBER Alert coordinators, law enforcement and broadcasters nationwide in bringing increased public awareness to the AMBER alert program and promoting public participation in the safe recovery of missing and abducted children.

The Alabama Department of Education is helping support the day's activities and public awareness of child safety issues by inviting 5th graders to participate in a national poster contest sponsored by the Department of Justice through its Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Child Protection Division.

"We provided information about the contest to the state's 50,000 educators via the department's newsletter, *Alabama Education News*," said Editor Rebecca Leigh White. "We anticipate that our fifth-grade teachers will use this valuable resource in their classrooms to help students become more aware of the importance of child safety and at the same time promote this important event."

Artwork will reflect the theme "Bringing Our Missing Children Home," and the national winning poster will represent child safety for the DOJ during the coming year. The winning artist and his or her family will be recognized at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on National Missing Children's Day, May 25.

Additional information about Alabama's AMBER Alert plan, including an archives of AMBER and Missing Child Media Alerts, is available on Public Safety's Web site www.dps.state.al.us under the ABI Division section. Information on the national AMBER plan and AMBER Alert Awareness Day is available at www.amberalert.gov.

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